

MARRIAGE: FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING

STUDY SIX

What Families Need to Thrive

Selections from Ephesians

My hope is that this message will not just remain as notes on your page, but it will become guidelines for you when nobody's looking—when pressure grows and you sense your family needing something to thrive. It's never too late to start.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

To determine the spiritual health of a family, you only need to look at the heads of the home. If the parents walk closely with God, then the children naturally will follow their path. When the love of Christ unites a husband and wife, that same love will permeate the rest of the family. Yes, as the parents go, so goes the family . . . for good or for bad

Of course, we all want to see our families go down the *right* road. But we sometimes lose our sense of direction and lead our families into dangerous territory. Only Scripture can guide us to the godly values and habits that allow families to thrive.

The next three *Searching the Scriptures* studies will focus on the topic of family. We will look at behaviors that damage a family and the right attitudes that will carry through generations of families. This study, however, will focus on values that Scripture teaches, which will allow families to thrive today.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

God welcomes into His family those who place their faith in Jesus Christ. As members of the family of God, we approach our caring heavenly Father offering our praise, thanksgiving, confession, and requests. Say this prayer to Him before you turn to His Word today:

Father, thank You for welcoming a broken sinner like me into Your eternal family. As I await the day that I am reunited with You and all my Christian brothers and sisters, use my time here on earth to glorify Your name. Equip me to do this through my study of Scripture today. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The apostle Paul's letter to the Christians in Ephesus was an essential treatise on the family of God. He begins by explaining how someone is adopted into this family—by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. And then he transitions to how a member of God's family should act in light of their newfound union with God in Christ.

Turn now to Ephesians 4 to see what Paul has to say about the family of God and to learn the timeless truths that will guide godly families today.



Observation: Commands for Thriving Families

Observation is the foundation of good Bible study.¹ Upon our observations of Scripture, we build accurate interpretation and, ultimately, practical application. Most of the time, we study one passage to see what truths a smaller section of Scripture teaches us. Sometimes, though, we look at bigger discourses to glean broader theological principles.

If you have time, read all of *Ephesians 4–6* to get the big picture of Paul's prescription for the family of God that we can apply to marriage and family. If time is limited, just read *4:25, 29–32; 5:21–22, 25; 6:1–4, 10–11, 18*.



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Using the chart below, list the command(s) Paul extends to the Ephesians. Be careful to check whether each command is *general* (for everyone) or *particular* (for a specific group of people). Then, note any additional observations about these verses. You could note a *contrast* between two commands, a *reason* for a command, a *clarification* about a command, or something else.

Verses	Commands	Additional Observations
4:25		
4:29–32		
5:21–22, 33		
5:25		
6:1–3		
6:4		
6:10–11		



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This set of commands is much more than a spiritual to-do list. Rather, by following these instructions, the Ephesians would strengthen the bond of unity among their Christian brothers and sisters. And the timeless truths embedded in these words show any nuclear family how to cultivate thriving relationships.



Interpretation: Principles for Thriving as a Family

To interpret Scripture, we consider the meaning of the text to determine timeless biblical principles that apply to all Christians. Review the key verse from each section, and complete the principle following this formula: “To thrive, Christian families should . . . by”

Family Value, Number One

Key verse: “So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth” (*Ephesians 4:25*).

Principle: *To thrive, Christian families should . . . by*

Family Value, Number Two

Key verse: “Don’t use foul or abusive language . . . so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them” (*Ephesians 4:29*).

Principle: *To thrive, Christian families should . . . by*



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Family Value, Number Three

Key verses: “For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. . . . So again I say . . . the wife must respect her husband” (*Ephesians 5:22, 33*).

Principle: *To thrive, Christian wives should . . . by*

Family Value, Number Four

Key verse: “For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church” (*Ephesians 5:25*).

Principle: *To thrive, Christian husbands should . . . by*



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Family Value, Number Five

Key verse: “Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do” (*Ephesians 6:1*).

Principle: *To thrive, Christian children should . . . by*

Family Value, Number Six

Key verse: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them” (*Ephesians 6:4*).

Principle: *To thrive, Christian parents should . . . by*



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Family Value, Number Seven

Key verse: “Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil” (*Ephesians 6:11*).

Principle: *To thrive, Christian families should . . . by . . .*

Family is where we learn to share, to relate, to treat other people. It’s where we learn to view our surroundings correctly. It’s where we determine the line between good and evil. It’s where we learn to make great decisions and to stand by our convictions. It’s all of that and so much more. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Thriving through Prayer

Prayer is the most important practice of the Christian life because it strengthens our relational bond with God, which then strengthens our marriage and family.

Read *Ephesians 6:18*. What truths does this verse teach about prayer?

Prevailing prayer. Pray for your family members. Name them every day. That’s praying without ceasing. That’s persisting in prayer. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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How can persistent prayer with your spouse and within your family help facilitate thriving relationships?

Practice persistent awareness. Stay awake. Pay attention. Watch for signs. Listen sensitively. Speak. Say something when you're concerned. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Thriving as a Family Today

From each of the seven parts of Ephesians we've studied today, Pastor Chuck Swindoll develops seven points of application—seven values of a godly family.

A thriving family:

- *Tells the truth*
- *Models restraint and courtesy*
- *Is willing to cooperate and adapt*
- *Demonstrates Christlike love*
- *Shows respect for authority*
- *Gives others space and encouragement*
- *Stands strong against the real enemy*



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Which of these seven values does your family already uphold? How have you seen this value produce healthy habits that have led your family to thrive?

Which of these seven values do you sense God leading your family to embrace more fully? If you are a spouse or a parent, how can you practically set an example as a pattern for the rest of your family to follow?

Satan wants nothing more than to rip apart godly families. By subtly assaulting the spiritual strength of even one member, he can fray the bonds that unite the whole family. The values discussed in this study work as a defense against Satan's attacks. And when we punctuate these values with persistent prayer, they will lead a family to thrive and to be healthier than ever before.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for giving me Your Word that contains the words of life—not just eternal life after I die but abundant life for today. Lead my family into this abundant life, starting with me. Protect my family from the schemes of Satan, and help us embrace the values you've laid out in Scripture so that we might thrive. I ask these things in Jesus' victorious name. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."

